DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 364 810 CG 025 133

| | |
|---|---|
| TITLE | The Day Mama Got Her Bonus. An Actions for Health Book. Contemporary Health Series. |
| INSTITUTION | ETR Associates, Santa Cruz, CA. |
| PUB DATE | 94 |
| NOTE | 26p.; For other "Actions for Health" books see CG 025 129-134. |
| AVAILABLE FROM | ETR Associates, P.O. Box 1830, Santa Cruz, CA 95061-1830. |
| PUB TYPE | Guides - General (050) |
| EDRS PRICE | MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS. |
| DESCRIPTORS | Children; *Cooperation; *Decision Making; Elementary Secondary Education; Fiction; *Siblings |

ABSTRACT

This document contains a short fictional story about three brothers who must decide how to spend $200 after their mother receives an unexpected bonus. The boys in the story have a brainstorming session and seek advice from adults before reaching a compromise that is acceptable to all of them. Readers learn about compromise, money management, and decision making. (NB)

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An *Actions for Health* Book

# The Day Mama Got Her Bonus

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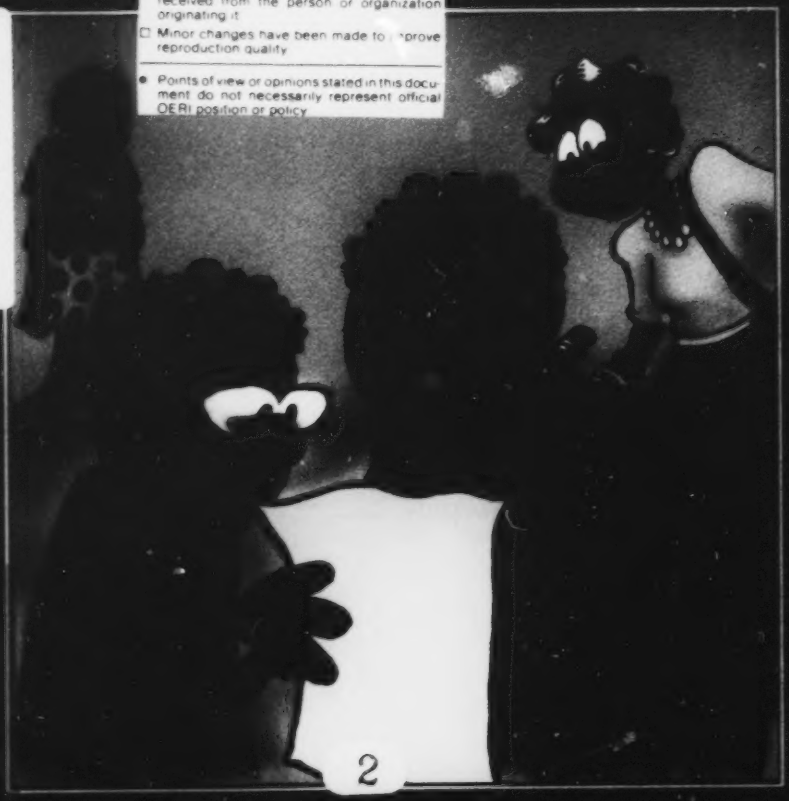

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ETR ASSOCIATES

CONTEMPORARY HEALTH SERIES

# The Day Mama Got Her Bonus

**An *Actions for Health* Book**

by ETR Associates

ETR ASSOCIATES
Santa Cruz, California
1994

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ETR Associates (Education, Training and Research) is a nonprofit organization committed to fostering the health, well-being and cultural diversity of individuals, families, schools and communities. The publishing program of ETR Associates provides books and materials that empower young people and adults with the skills to make positive health choices. We invite health professionals to learn more about our high-quality publishing, training and research programs by contacting us at P.O. Box 1830, Santa Cruz, CA 95061-1830, 1-800-321-4407.

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Published by ETR Associates
Printed in the United States of America
Illustrated by Nina Paley
Design by Ann Smiley

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

The Day Mama got her bonus / by ETR Associates ; illustrated by Nina Paley.
p. cm.—(Contemporary health series)
"An Actions for health book."
Summary: Three brothers learn to compromise when their mother allows them to decide how to spend part of her bonus money.
[1. Problem solving—Fiction. 2. Brothers—Fiction.] I. Paley, Nina, ill. II. ETR Associates. III. Series.
PZ7.W575 1994 93-16476
[E]—dc20

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## *Mama's Big News*

One Friday last April, Mama came home from work with a big smile on her face. I knew something was up.

"What is it, Mama?" I asked.

"What's what, Jake?" she replied.

"Mama, you've got some good news that you're not telling me."

"Go find your brothers," Mama said. "And get your grandma."

Nicky was watching TV. And Grandma was making dinner. But where was Sammy? I had to find him.

I found him down the block. He was playing with some other first graders. By the time we got home, dinner was ready.

We sat down at the table. Mama still had a big smile on her face.

Mama looked at each of us. Then she said, "I have some great news. I did a lot of extra work on a special project for my boss, and she gave me a bonus."

"How much, Mama?" we asked.

"Five hundred dollars!" Mama said.

We all started screaming at the same time.

"Five hundred dollars!"

"We can buy a Nintendo!"

"We can go to Six Flags!"

"We can buy a swimming pool!"

"Slow down, young men," Mama said. "I've decided to put two hundred dollars in savings. And I'll need another hundred to fix the muffler on the car.

"I worked hard for this bonus. But I know you boys have been working hard, too—in school and helping out here at home. So I'm going to let the three of you decide how to spend the two hundred dollars that are left."

Well, you know how guys are. We all started talking at once. We each had an idea about what to do with the rest of the money. Mama listened to us.

Then she said, "You have lots of good ideas, boys. I want you to work together and agree on an idea for the rest of the money. But remember three things. One, the idea has to be for something safe. Two, it can't cost more than two hundred dollars. And three, you must all agree on the same idea."

I just sat there for a moment. The Mackey brothers never agreed on anything! How would we ever agree on how to spend two hundred dollars?

## *Starting the Plan*

That night I thought about the two hundred dollars. I knew what I'd do if the money were all mine. I'd buy a new bike. But we had to share this money. And two hundred dollars wasn't enough to buy three new bikes.

I didn't have any other ideas. But I'm the oldest, so it was my job to start the plan. After school the next day, I had a meeting with my brothers.

"Well, guys, have you thought about the money?" I asked.

"Yeah," said Nicky, "but I'm not sure what we should buy." Nicky is eight. He likes to take his time in making decisions.

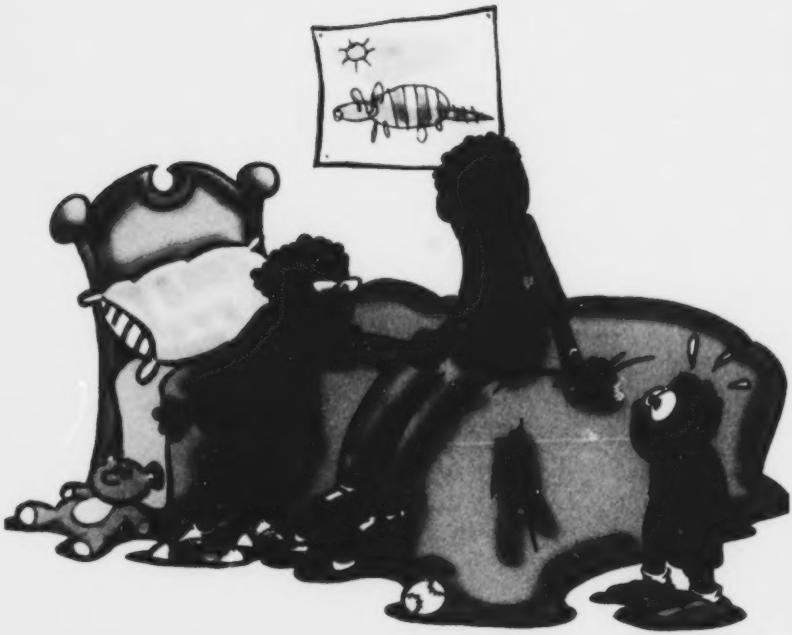
"How about you, Sammy?" I asked. "What do you think we should do with the money?"

"I think we should fly to Florida," Sammy said. "Don't you think that's a great idea, guys?"

"That's silly, Sam," Nicky said, laughing. "We don't have enough money to fly even one of us to Florida."

Sam ran out of the room.

So much for day one.



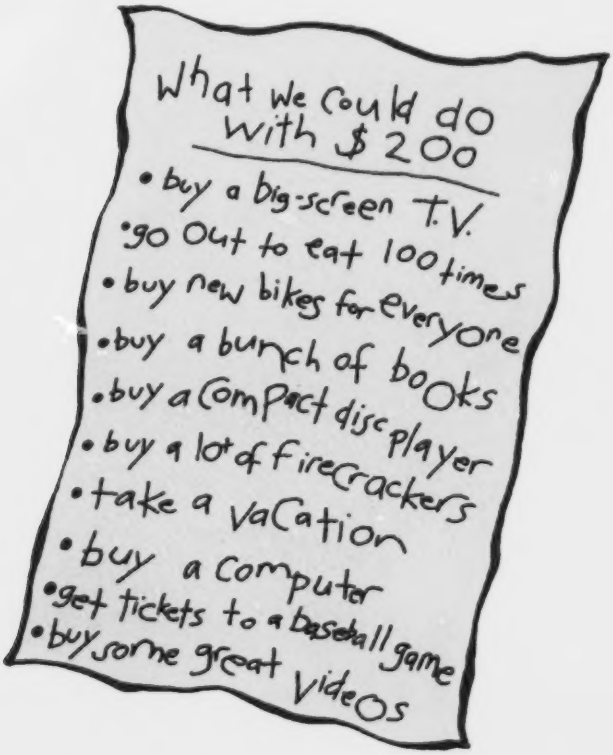
### *Brainstorming*

The next day I was able to get the three of us together again. Sammy didn't want to come to a meeting until Nicky said he was sorry for laughing at him.

Since I'm the oldest, I reminded Sammy and Nicky that we had to agree, or no one would get anything with the money. So we started again.

We tried something new—brainstorming. I asked Nicky and Sam to come up with as many ideas as they could. I wrote all the ideas on a sheet of paper. We had lots of neat ideas.

Our list looked like this:

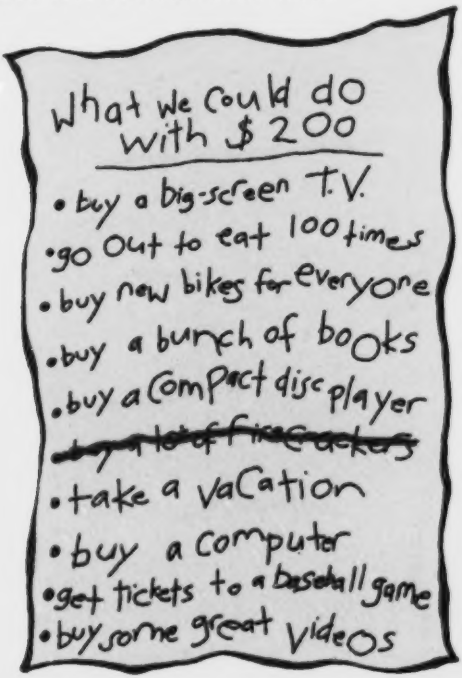

What we could do with $200
• buy a big-screen T.V.
• go out to eat 100 times
• buy new bikes for everyone
• buy a bunch of books
• buy a compact disc player
• buy a lot of firecrackers
• take a vacation
• buy a computer
• get tickets to a baseball game
• buy some great videos

After we made the list, I reminded Nicky and Sam about what Mama had said.

"OK," I said. "First of all, Mama said our decision had to be something safe. Is everything on this list safe?"

"Not firecrackers," Nicky said.

Now the list looked like this: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Mama also said we could only spend two hundred dollars. So we thought about how much each thing on the list cost.

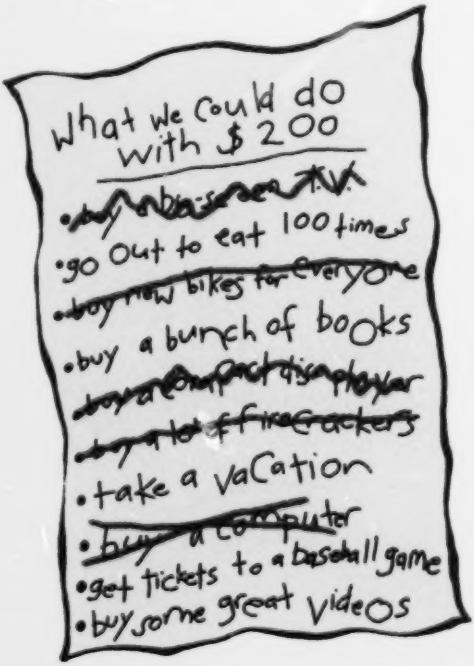
We looked at some ads in the paper for some prices. The big-screen TV cost a lot more than two hundred dollars.

Two hundred dollars would buy one whole bike and a third of a second bike.

A compact disc player only cost a hundred and fifty dollars. But compact discs cost fourteen or fifteen dollars each. So if we bought the player, we wouldn't have many discs to listen to.

And a computer cost a *lot* more than two hundred dollars.

So now our list looked like this: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We kept looking at the list. Going out to eat a hundred times wasn't going to work. We spent at least ten dollars every time we went out to eat. So we changed it to twenty times.

We might have enough money to take a vacation. But we couldn't fly, and we couldn't go too far for too long.

We could go to more than one baseball game with two hundred dollars. But there was no team where we lived. We'd have to drive into Chicago, and that was 75 miles away.

We could buy some really neat books with two hundred dollars. We could also buy a lot of videos. So we left those on the list.

I looked at the list. "OK, guys," I said, "Pick."

Sammy knew what he wanted.

"I think we should spend the money on a vacation," he said. "I really like going on trips."

Nicky knew what he wanted, too. "I want to go out to eat twenty times. That's the most fun."

I knew what I wanted, too. "I want to buy tickets for baseball games. They are so cool."

Each of us tried hard to talk the others into what he wanted.

We weren't having any luck.

## *Grandma's Good Advice*

Then Grandma knocked on my bedroom door. She came in and sat down on the side of my bed.

"What are you up to?" she asked.

I showed her our list and explained the problem. She nodded.

"Grandma, can't you make these guys see that I have the best idea?" Sammy said.

"Don't listen to him, Gran," Nicky said. "Going out to eat all the time is the best idea in the world."

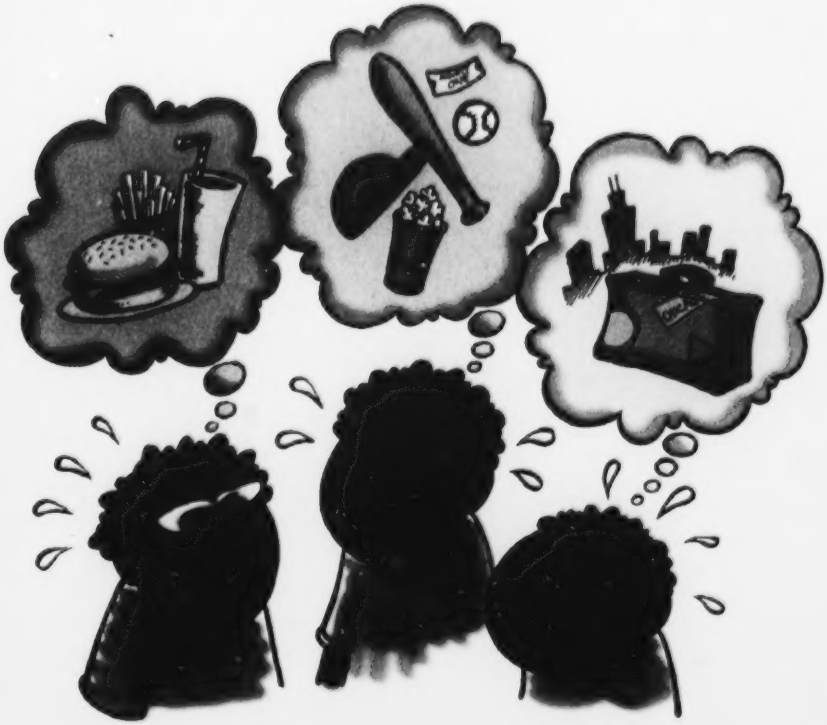
"Don't you think baseball games are great, Gran?" I asked.

"I think I can help you," Grandma said.

"Oh, Grandma," Nicky said. "Can you tell us which is the right answer?"

"No, Nicky," she said. "I can't do that. But I can help you decide what to do.

"Close your eyes. Now think about what you're trying to do. Right now, at this very minute, are you trying to solve the problem or to get your own way?"



Well, we all knew the answer to that question.

"Sometimes, we have to compromise," Grandma said. "That doesn't mean you give up what you want. But it means you give up part of what you want so you can get part of what you want."

I thought about it, give up a little to get a little.

"You mean if we decided to only go out to eat ten times and to go to one baseball game?" I asked.

"Yes," Grandma said. "That would be a kind of compromise."

"Or we could go on a short trip and eat out all the time," Sammy said.

"Or we could go to Chicago and see a baseball game while we're there," Nick said.

"Now you guys are on the right track," Grandma said.

All of a sudden, it hit me. We could do all three!

"Think about it, guys," I said. "Aunt Theresa keeps inviting us to visit her in Chicago. What if we went and stayed with her? We could get tickets to a baseball game. We could go out to eat lots of times. And we might even have enough money left to go up in the Sears Tower. And if we start saving our money from now till we go there, we can do some more stuff. What do you think?"

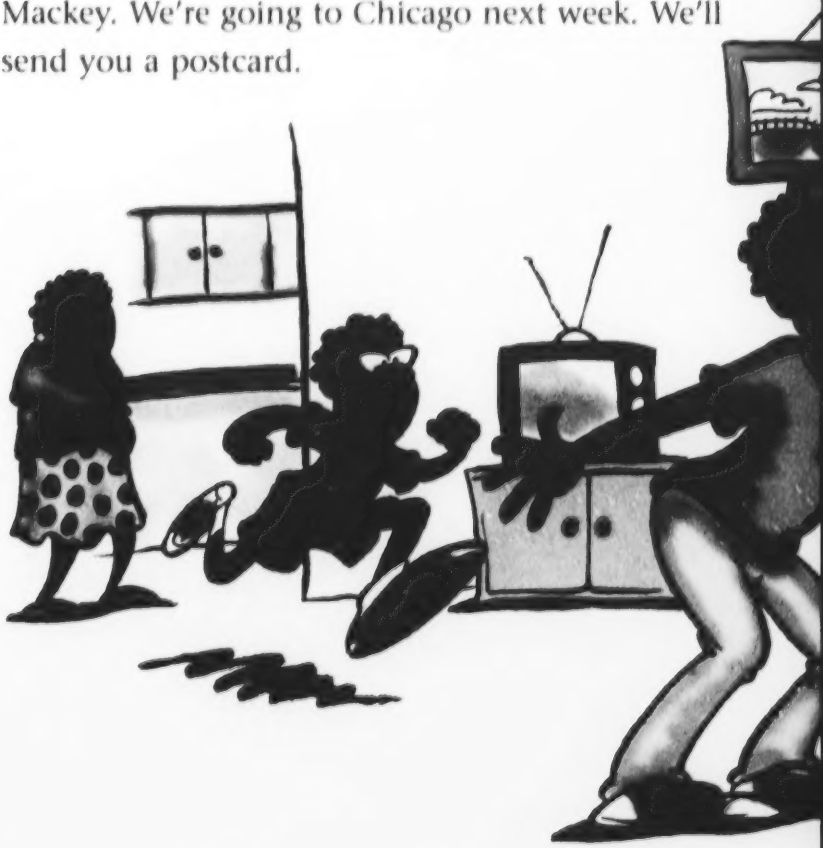
"I can live with that," Nicky said.

"I like this idea a lot," Sammy said.

"Boys," Grandma said, "this is what I call a *win-win-win* solution!"

The minute Mama walked through the door that night, we started telling her about our plan. I could tell she was happy.

My brothers and I were happy, too. We're thinking of calling ourselves Win, Win and Win Mackey. We're going to Chicago next week. We'll send you a postcard.



## *Two Hundred Dollars!*

This book is about working together to solve problems. When their mother receives an unexpected bonus, Jake, Nicky and Sammy must decide how to spend $200. How will they ever agree? See how the brothers compromise to reach a winning solution!

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